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REMARKS

In response to the non-final Office action mail-dated 08/08/06, reconsideration of the application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

This Amendment is being filed via facsimile transmission in accordance with 37 CFR 1.8.

Although no fees are anticipated in association with this Amendment, the Office is respectfully requested to charge any required fees, and credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account 50-0958.

By this Amendment, claims 13 and 20 are canceled; claims 14-17, 21 and 24 are amended. Claims 14-19 and 21-34 thus remain in the application, of which claims 14, 25 and 31 are independent claims.

Preliminarily, Applicant respectfully infers that the drawings are accepted by the Office, based on lack of indication to the contrary.

By the 08/08/06 Office action, claims 13 and 15-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jackett et al. U.S. Patent 4,862,428 in view of Harris U.S. Patent 2,837,731.

In response to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) of claims 13 and 15-19, Applicant herein cancels claim 13.

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As further explained hereinbelow, rejected claims 15-19 remain in the application. In particular, Applicant amends claims 15-17 in terms of their dependencies in response to indications of allowability by the Office action.

By the Office action, claims 25-34 are allowed.

Applicant appreciates the Office's favorable consideration of claims 25-34.

By the Office action, claims 14 and 20-24 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicant appreciates the Office's favorable consideration of claims 14 and 20-24.

In response to the objection to claims 14 and 20-24, Applicant herein rewrites claim 14 in independent form so as to include all of the limitations of claims 13 and 14. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully urges allowability of claim 14 as amended herein.

Applicant also respectfully urges allowability of all claims now depending from amended claim 14. Claims 15-19 and 21-24 are each amended to depend, directly or indirectly, from allowable claim 14. Of particular note, claims 15-17 are each amended to depend from claim 14 rather than claim 13. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully urges allowability of amended claims 15-19 and 21-24, at least for the reasons that amended claim 14 is allowable.

Please note the deletion in claim 17 of the language "said tube has two tubular ends," as claim 14 (from which claim 17

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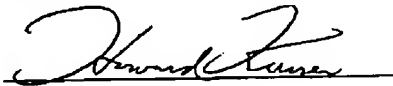
depends) recites that "said tube is characterized by a tubular length and two tubular ends."

With regard to the indicated allowability of claims 20-24, Applicant respectfully points out that claims 14 and 20, as they exist prior to this Amendment, contain the same claim body. Applicant therefore takes the economical approach of effectively rewriting dependent claim 20 -- not at independent claim 20 -- but as dependent claim 19, which now indirectly depends (via claim 17) from claim 14 instead of claim 13. Claim 19 now recites the same limitations as does the claim 20 that the Office action indicates would be allowable if appropriately rewritten in independent form. Claims 21 and 24 are amended to depend from claim 19 instead of claim 20. Applicant respectfully requests the Office's indulgence of this money-saving measure, which avoids the \$200 fee that would be incurred by the Navy for an extra independent claim if claim 20 were rewritten in independent form.

In view of the foregoing, and in addition to allowance of claims 25-34, Applicant respectfully requests allowance of claims 14-19 and 21-24 as amended herein.

Examiner Lobo should please not hesitate to call Attorney Kaiser at tel. no. 301-227-1834 if there are any questions in this matter.

Respectfully submitted,


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10/27/06
date

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